

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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Nearly three-quarters of inmates who tested positive for COVID-19 earlier this month have already recovered; vast majority have remained asymptomatic

Follow-up testing underway; aggressive mitigation efforts continue

Dover, DE - Ten days after the Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) announced the results of proactive COVID-19 testing for the entire inmate population at Sussex Correctional Institution (SCI), officials announced today that 263 inmates - nearly three-quarters of all inmates who tested positive for the illness at two correctional facilities this month - have already recovered. The vast majority have remained free of symptoms since their positive test results were received.

"Inmates at SCI are recovering quickly and fully due to our aggressive mitigation and treatment efforts, and that's a direct result of the hard work and dedication of the leadership and officers at SCI and the high quality of care being provided by our correctional healthcare provider," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said**. "Many new recoveries take place every day, and today only 14 inmates have any symptoms of illness."

Additionally, DOC announced that one work release participant from the Plummer Community Corrections Center (PCCC) in Wilmington has tested positive for COVID-19. The result comes from DOC's weekly proactive COVID-19 testing of all work release participants statewide. The offender is asymptomatic of illness and has been transferred to the COVID-19 Treatment Center at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center in Smyrna. DOC immediately initiated contact tracing efforts, isolated and tested other inmates who came into sustained contact with the offender, and communicated with the work release employer to initiate precautionary measures. This is the first PCCC offender to test positive during the COVID-19 pandemic. After a two-month suspension, DOC restarted work release for a limited number of offenders this past month with rigorous safeguards in place, including isolation of all work release participants from other offenders at all times, twice-daily symptom checks, employer monitoring, and weekly proactive COVID-19 testing.

"Our work release participants want to work, and we have created innovative opportunities to keep them working and earning good time credits. These measures are designed with significant safeguards in place to protect offenders, correctional staff, and the community," **Commissioner DeMatteis said.**

In early July, proactive monitoring and testing identified a cluster of SCI inmates with COVID-19. [DOC responded, in part, by initiating testing of all 973 inmates which revealed that the infectious disease spread predominately within three open dormitory-style housing units at the prison compound.](#) Additionally, 20 inmates at Morris Community Corrections Center (MCCC) in Dover tested positive for the illness. The MCCC cluster of cases originated with the transfer of three SCI inmates who had completed their Level V sentence and were transferred to complete their Level IV term of incarceration.

Over the past three weeks, 90% of the inmates who tested positive from SCI and MCCC have had no symptoms of illness. Inmates with positive test results were transferred to the COVID-19 Treatment Centers at SCI and James T. Vaughn Correctional Center. These facilities, which were established to hospital standards, are staffed with security and medical staff that provide round-the-clock monitoring and care to inmate patients.

Except for at SCI and MCCC, and one isolated case at PCCC, there are no COVID-19 cases among inmates at the remaining six DOC Level IV and Level V facilities. [Click HERE to review a current tracking chart of active inmate and staff COVID-19 cases and recoveries.](#)

DOC continues its aggressive COVID-19 mitigation efforts at SCI and MCCC, including:

- Daily temperature checks, screenings for symptoms, and pulse oxygen level testing for inmates.
- Follow-up testing is underway for inmates who initially tested negative. 65 follow-up tests have already been completed to-date.
- In-person visitation to all DOC facilities was suspended as a precaution.
- Temporary suspension of programming in an effort to restrict movement across the facility. Inmates are continuing to be provided recreation time, including in outside recreation areas.
- Voluntary COVID-19 testing is being offered to officers and medical personnel at SCI, MCCC, and other DOC facilities.
- Additional deep cleanings are being conducted, including decontamination of housing units with specialized fogging machines.
- SCI stopped accepting new commits on a temporary basis.

Currently across all correctional facilities, 54 DOC staff and healthcare contractors have tested positive for COVID-19, while 103 DOC staff and healthcare contractors assigned to DOC facilities have recovered from the illness. No additional information will be provided about the identity of the inmates or staff members for privacy protection.

The DOC continues to employ a variety of prevention, screening, cleaning and containment measures to guard against the spread of the novel coronavirus, including:

- All persons, including Officers, administrative staff and probationers who enter any Level V prison, Level IV violation of probation or work release center, or Probation and Parole Office are screened for COVID-19, including a series of questions and a forehead temperature check with a thermometer
- Staff who present with symptoms are sent home to self-quarantine and directed to contact their health care provider.
- Newly arriving inmates are held in isolation for the first 14 days, during which they are carefully monitored, including daily temperature checks with a thermometer.
- DOC has implemented extra daily cleaning of DOC facilities and is using specialized fogging machines to disinfect entire rooms of common areas, housing units and workspaces.
- Face masks are being worn by Correctional Officers and contract healthcare workers as a protection for inmates, Officers and other employees. All Correctional Officers have been wearing face masks since April 10.
- **Face masks have been provided to every inmate at all Level V prison and Level IV work release and violation of probation facilities statewide, more than 4,300 in total.**

Certain programs, including treatment and education programs and religious programming, have been transitioned to a virtual video format. DOC has sped up implementation of new virtual video transmission capabilities across Level IV and Level V facilities to enable expanded medical and behavioral health telemedicine and inmate programming.

Inmates across Delaware's correctional system continue to have outside recreation opportunities within their confined areas and continue to have access to phones to stay in regular contact with their loved ones. DOC is also expanding the use of electronic tablets among the inmate population, where available.

Get updated information about the DOC's response to COVID-19 and read previous announcements of positive COVID-19 cases by visiting <https://doc.delaware.gov>, and follow *decorrection* on Facebook and Twitter.